

Tree Maps for Birds

A guide to making kin with other-than-human

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Honours Exegesis

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Contents	Page
Acknowledgements	3
Abstract.....	4
Introduction	5
Project Description	6
Literature and Artefacts.....	8
Methodologies.....	17
Methods.....	21
Outcomes and Conclusion.....	26
List of Figures	29
Bibliography	31
Appendices	38
Appendix 1 Map.....	37
Appendix 2 Bird List	38
Appendix 3 Spectrographs.....	39
Appendix 4 Alchemy of Ink	41

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I am indebted to Courtney Hebbberman for her generosity in sharing Peramangk stories and language, and for helping me begin to learn deeper ways of seeing and understanding country.

¹[First Nations people] speak of country in the same way as they speak about their human relatives. People visit country and listen to country; they sing for country and cry for country. They worry greatly about country and speak longingly of places they are unable to visit because it is now part of a pastoral property.' John Bradley, *Singing Saltwater Country*, (Crows Nest, Australia, Allen & Unwin, 2010), 228.

Abstract

My Honours research is situated within the field of eco-arts practice with a focus on habitat and species loss. I explore ways to unsettle our anthropocentric viewpoint with the intention to make kin with other-than-human and encourage caring for country. I draw on the methodologies of practice led research, post human feminism, and new materialism to investigate our disengagement with the natural world. My research has been informed by theorists and authors Deborah Bird Rose, Caroline Merchant, Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett, and Graham Harvey, whose work elicits a deeper understanding of Cartesian dualism, and anthropocentrism.

I am inspired by the work of key Australian artists Janet Laurence, Lucienne Rickard and John Wolseley, whose practices are centred around our relationship with, and responsibility to, the natural world. By using methods of fieldwork and birdwatching I examine how mapping, memory, and my relationship with a specific bushland reserve, can be used to investigate absence, fragmentation, and repair. In undertaking to make inks from natural materials I foreground ideas of the agency of materials and the resonance of connection to place.

Key outcomes of this project include the extension of my expertise in ink making practices, which potentially can lead to a significant contribution in this field. My studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of historical perspectives on environmental issues and encourage my enthusiasm to undertake further academic research. I feel fortunate in making connection within the Peramangk community which offers the opportunity for further research and collaborations.

Introduction

‘You can’t fix the whole world; you have to do what you can in your corner of the world and make it as good as you possibly can.’²

This Honours project focusses on representation of the other-than-human to unsettle our anthropocentric viewpoint with the intention to bear witness to habitat and bird species loss. My research explores the work of artists and theorists who engage in ecologically based practices, who seek to mend our relationship with the natural world. Through my art practice I endeavour to engage people in connecting ‘... with the greater ecological community of their environing world...’, with the view to ‘...encourage a more caring and responsible role for people within that community.’³

The structure of this exegesis begins with a project overview which aims to familiarise the reader with my field. It will then expand on the literature and artefacts which inform my project, and delve into my methods, and methodologies. These sections, along with my reflections, are intertwined, reflecting the ways in which my research informs my practice, which subsequently leads to new paths of investigation. This interweaving of the writing echoes the complex process undertaken during my research year. The exegesis culminates with a summary of my creative outcomes and conclusions. The appendices are provided to aid and inform the reader. They include a map of the local area, a list of the birds of the reserve, and a brief overview concerning the relevance of the bird spectrographs and the botanical inks to my project.

² It’s 1979, I am sobbing on my mum’s shoulder having just learned about the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. She is nonplussed at how to deal with my unexpected reaction, and I am overwhelmed with grief for a place I had long dreamed about that now was being destroyed. To calm me she uses her strong assertive voice to tell me with great intensity... ‘You can’t fix the whole world; you have to do what you can in your corner of the world and make it as good as you possibly can.’ Viv Szekeres.

³ Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006), 4, 5.

Project description

‘Too many of us have all but forgotten – or have we forsaken? - the trees that have given us sanctuary.’⁴

My Honours project is a mixed media installation that seeks to entangle the visitor into an immersive experience, reminding us of our intrinsic connection with nature. The question driving this project is how can site responsive art works offer ways to make kin with other species in a fragmented but shared environing world?

I respond to this question by investigating ways to disrupt our human perspective, to convey a perspective of otherness and to elicit connection to the birds and their habitat, with the intention to encourage caring for country. This project stems from a four-year research project at the South Australian Museum (SAM), investigating a historic collection of eggs, and the stories of colonisation and species loss interwoven within this archive.⁵ My Honours project branches out, investigating the idea of kinship with other-than-human.⁶ The difference between these projects lies primarily in their situatedness within their specific environments, however they share an archival sensitivity in recording environmental losses.⁷ My research is grounded in the methodologies of practice led research, post human feminism, and new materialism. Drawing from ideas of Jane Bennett’s notion of *thing power* I aim to embed the resonance of materiality into the work.⁸

⁴ Fiona Hall, Peter Emmett, Tony Kanellos, *Santos MEB Museum of Economic Botany*, (South Australia, Adelaide, Board of the Botanic Gardens & State Herbarium, 2010), 100.

⁵ This resulted in a publication which was grounded in the archival impulse and museum culture; Jorji Gardener, Viv Szekeres, *Flight, An Illustrated Notebook of Bird Life and Loss*, (Adelaide, Curated Sky Publications, 2022).

⁶ The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection...’ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Croydon, Duke University Press, 2016), 1; Throughout this exegesis I will use the term other-than-human. Ongoing debate suggest that the term ‘more-than-human’ maintains a dualistic mindset, and ‘nonhuman’ has negative connotations and fails to facilitate connection.

⁷ ‘In the first instance archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object, and text.’ Hall Foster, *An Archival Impulse, OCTOBER 110*, MIT Press, 3-22, (2004).

⁸ Jane Bennett describes *thing power* as, “... the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.” Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter a political ecology of things*, (USA, Duke University Press, 2010).

The project is informed by the writings of Deborah Bird Rose, Caroline Merchant, Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett, and Graham Harvey, whose work collectively offers a critique of Cartesian dualism, while seeking to decentre the human view. My project is inspired and influenced by Australian artists Janet Laurence, Lucienne Rickard, and John Wolseley, who work in the field of eco-art practice.⁹

Towards the end of my project, I learned of deep mapping and a community of artists and theorists working in this field. My analysis has demonstrated that this framework encompasses all aforesaid methodologies and will be significant for my ongoing art practice. My research project investigates ways and means to entangle the viewer into an understanding of our ecological relationships and to cultivate our capacity for response. By using methods of fieldwork and birdwatching, I examine how mapping and memory, can be used to investigate absence and fragmentation and connection to place. This research has evolved into a body of work that offers an immersive experience to entangle the viewer in a forested world of tree-like forms.¹⁰ Within these tree-maps can be seen signs of mapping, fragmentation, and repair. Accompanying these is a wall installation of illuminated bird calls, and an archive of weatherworn papers.

⁹ 'Eco-art – a broad field of inter, or transdisciplinary arts practice, distinguished from Land Art and Environmental Art by its specific focus on “earth-sensitive” ideologies and methodologies, ethics, and transformative practice.' Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006),3.

¹⁰ Throughout the exegesis I will refer to these as tree-maps.

Literature and Artefacts

The rationale behind my project is founded in a belief that the only valid response to the environmental crisis is to bear witness. Theorists who inform my research and speak to these issues are Carolyn Merchant, Beth Carruthers, Jane Bennett, Donna Haraway, Deborah Bird Rose, and Graham Harvey. In her master's thesis, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, Carruthers states that in response to the ecological crisis, there is a growing 'body of ecologically engaged artworks and art practices.'¹¹ I position my research and practice within a community of artists working towards environmental change to help me consider how site responsive art works can offer ways to make kin with other species. Here, I will be discussing the work of Australian artists Janet Laurence, Lucienne Rickard, and John Wolseley, who 'set out to engage the public in environmentally sensitive behaviours ... via innovative pedagogic methodologies.'¹² My project contributes to this field of practice,

Through connecting people with the greater ecological community of their environing world, and by revealing, or foregrounding these ecological relationships in ways that are emotional, embodied, and non-cognitive, (artists) aim to encourage a more caring and responsible role for people within that community.¹³

This entanglement of interspecies relationships can be seen in natural ecosystems; however, it is not evidenced in our 'modern world.' In her book *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction*, Rose states, 'To live powerfully in the world requires people to act responsibly within the relationships in which their own lives are emmeshed.'¹⁴ Carruthers argues that the most effective aspects of eco art is where it seeks to engage all our senses, 'in an ethical, emotional conversation that foregrounds the world as a relational matrix within which we dwell.'¹⁵

¹¹ Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006), 4.

¹² Ibid, 4.

¹³ Ibid, 6.

¹⁴ Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction*, (USA, University of Virginia Press, 2011), 86.

¹⁵ Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006), 5.

Laurence's practice embodies this sensorial, interconnectedness with nature, demonstrated in her *Theatre of Trees* 2018-19 (Fig. 1), a complex and immersive work, which engages the viewer in a sense of involvement with the natural world.



Figure 1. Janet Laurence, (b.1947-) *Theatre of Trees*, 2018–2019. Four circular structures, mesh, silk, duraclear, audio, video projections, books, scientific glass, plant specimens, botanical models, and substances. dimensions unstated.

The concept of entanglements features extensively in Haraway's writings, which posit that 'we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations... We become with each other or not at all...'¹⁶ In agreement with Carruthers, Haraway believes that this is where art plays a role, as a method for creating connections and change. Like Laurence, I am motivated to explore ways to entangle the viewer into an understanding of our ecological relationships.¹⁷ Inspired by Laurence's *Theatre of Trees*, I am encouraged to experiment with installation art as a method to animate and engage the viewer.

¹⁶ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Croydon, Duke University Press, 2016), 4.

¹⁷ 'Artists who become Eco-art practitioners are collectively distressed at the loss of habitat and species... And what many of these Eco-art works do in particular is to introduce humans to other-than-human elements and open up a space where the voice of others in the ecological community may be heard and responded to...' Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006), 4, 12.

Laurence's focus on 'the liminal zones or meeting places of art, science, and memory,' has relevance to my project.¹⁸ Her work *The matter of the masters*, 2017, (Fig. 2) was inspired by her research undertaken on Dutch old master paintings in the Rijksmuseum. This work addresses our human relationship to nature embedded within cultural historic objects. It makes visible the connections between the natural materials used to make pigments in the paintings of artists such as Rembrandt.¹⁹

Through my fieldwork and research into ink making I too seek to make visible the alchemical transformations involved in creating pigments from plant material. My experience as an artist working within the scientific world of Artlab Australia and SAM's natural history domain, revealed an understanding of my unique placement as an artist to weave together these varied disciplines. Melding together these diverse branches of knowledge with visual storytelling I evoke what Paul Carter calls 'poetic wisdom.'²⁰ It is not within the scope of this exegesis to delve into the history or chemistry of ink; however, it is extremely significant to my work and more information on my processes can be found in Appendix 4.²¹

My experiments working with natural inks have led me down new paths, where I introduce aspects of fragility and corrosion into the paper. Alchemical agency, including the weathering of inked papers onsite allows for the *thing power* of natural processes to embed new marks and absences within the work.²² By these means I aim to highlight the fragility of the environment and embed the site into the materiality of the work.

¹⁸ Janet Laurence speaking on her work, Artist Website, <https://www.janetlaurence.com>

¹⁹ 'In providing an artistic interpretation of the palette of this era, Laurence stresses that all matter stems from the environment and that nature and culture are deeply entwined.' Laura Lantieri, 'Janet Laurence, What Colour is the Sacred', *Arc One Gallery*, (2018) <https://arcone.com.au/news2/xahg98hxl4ex4hwy4hg7x6srbsbc3z>

²⁰ 'The artist through a capacity to perceive analogies existing between matters far apart and, apparently, most dissimilar, mythopoetically creates "poetic wisdom."' Paul Carter, *Material Thinking*, (Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2004), 7.

²¹ A more detailed description on the inks can be found in the appendix, *Alchemy of Ink*, page 41.

²² Paige Allen highlights this process, stating, 'We may imagine matter as inert, static, lifeless. But for new materialists, matter is anything but impotent. Matter has force and agency.' Paige Allen, *What is New Materialism*, *Perlego*, <https://www.perlego.com/knowledge/study-guides/what-is-new-materialism/#>



Figure 2. Janet Laurence, (b.1947-) *The matter of the masters* (detail), 2017, mixed media, dimensions variable.

In her seminal book *The Death of Nature*, Merchant illustrates how a disconnection from nature commenced with the development of the Scientific Revolution.²³ This mechanical world view replaced an understanding of the earth as a living organism, one that was seen as inherently female. Merchant expounds on this rift, linking the cause of our current environmental crisis to Cartesian dualism, which viewed nature as separate from ourselves, a ‘thing’ to be exploited.²⁴ Working to highlight the consequences of this exploitation is artist Lucienne Rickard. Seeing Rickard’s work *Extinction Studies* at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in 2019, had a profound impact on me. Rickard’s project is a visceral response to species loss, as she painstakingly draws and erases species from *The Red List of Threatened Species*.²⁵

²³ ‘The ancient identity of nature as a nurturing mother links women’s history with the history of the environment... [which] was undermined by the Scientific Revolution and the rise of a market-oriented culture in early modern Europe.’ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, (New York, Harper One, 1983), xxx.

²⁴ ‘In investigating the roots of our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology, and the economy, we must re-examine the formation of a world view and science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women.’ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, (New York, Harper One, 1983) xxxi

²⁵ ‘Established in 1964, the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species has evolved to become the world’s most comprehensive information source on the global extinction risk status of animal, fungus and plant species.’ The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2022-23 <https://www.iucnredlist.org>.

Extinction Studies, (Fig. 3) highlights the critical situation of species loss and challenges the view of art as commodification.²⁶ Erasing each drawing, Rickard reminds us of our complicity and responsibility, which are focal points in my work. This use of erasure is an effective tool and one I sought to develop in my work to convey concepts of habitat fragmentation and bird species loss.



Figure 3. Lucienne Rickard (b. 1981-) *Extinction Studies, The Least Vermilion Flycatcher*, 2019, graphite on paper. detail image, dimensions unstated.

These iterations demonstrate the progression of erasure and traces left within the paper.

Themes of concealment and absence in my work correlate with Rickard's rubbing out of her drawings, which leave a faint palimpsest, a memory of the animal, a suggestion that if we do not act this is all that will remain. In planning her project Rickard says she wanted to incorporate the idea of *pentimento* and saw it as a form of ritualistic penance, drawing attention to what is omitted.²⁷ I have used this concept of reparation in my work, to subvert the map as an act of repair and atonement for the damage colonisation has caused. My work

²⁶ 'That she would have nothing to show for her work after a year of drawing also seemed appropriate; if *Extinction Studies* would, by connotation, criticise extractive economies and a market contingent on environmental degradation, breaking the artist's contract seemed the only choice. So, for one year she would work and produce nothing saleable, she would create beautiful pieces only to destroy them. She would leave nothing for the commercial world.' Keely Jobe, Lucienne Rickard, 'The Art of Refusal', *The Living Archive*, (2020) <https://www.extinctionstories.org/2020/05/05/the-art-of-refusal/>

²⁷ 'Pentimento, a visual art term deriving from the word *repentance*. Pentimento refers to the part of a painting that's been covered over by a later painting, and specifically to the re-emergence of that sublayer. The word literally means *a correction*.' Ibid.

seeks to perform other types of representation, to propose alternative perspectives, or, to paraphrase Ross Gibson, to 'vault over silence, denial, and absence... to make manifest an urge to account for the disconnected fragments.'²⁸

During *Extinction Studies*, Rickard worked onsite at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery where people were able to watch her creating and erasing her detailed drawings. This performative aspect allowed her to engage with the community, encouraging important conversations. Carruthers emphasises the importance of this discourse, stating, 'at the centre of Eco-art practices is conversation.'²⁹ By documenting threatened species Rickard taps into the methodology of archival instinct and performs a testimony to their lives and deaths, which I likewise undertake with my work *Bird Guides*. (Fig.4) These works aim to allow other-than-human voices to be heard by documenting the spectrograms of fifty of the sixty-six known bird species found at the reserve.³⁰ Throughout the process of making the spectrograms, I sensed that I was inviting the voices of the birds, re-calling their songs. To further situate myself within the bird's world, I listened to each call while drilling the pattern into the paper. The visual images of the bird calls have become etched into my memory so that I now recall the pattern of the spectrograms when hearing their calls. In this way I am adding layers to my understanding and connections with these bird kin. To bring their voices to life I illuminated the spectrograms, to entrance the viewer and welcome them into this other-than-human world.

²⁸ Ross Gibson, 'Places Past Disappearance,' *Transformations Journal*, Issue 13- Making Badlands (2006), p.23.

²⁹ Carruthers expounds on this, stating, '...in conversation we learn about and come to know others. And what many of these Eco-art works do in particular is to introduce humans to other-than-human elements and open up a space where the voice of others in the ecological community may be heard and responded to.' Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006), 19.

³⁰ 'A spectrogram is a visualization of an audio recording based on the frequency of sound over time. This differs from a traditional waveform that visualizes a sound based on its amplitude.' <https://becausebirds.com/visualize-bird-songs-with-spectrograms/>



Figure 4. Jorji Gardener, (b.1965-) *Bird Guides*, (series) 2023, pierced paper, discarded from the Ornithology department, SAM, 15 x 30cm.

It became apparent that archival practices are present in my project, and while this was not a methodology that I sought out, it is situated within the work. In her book Joan Gibbons considers how art can access ‘... renderings of memory, [that] are often allusive and suggestive of the past, tapping into our reservoir of emotions as much as into our store of cognitive knowledge.’³¹ This statement encapsulates my intention for these works to connect the viewer with an evocative, palpable experience. Analysing Jacques Derrida’s work on the archive, Thea Constantino affirms Derrida’s view that although the archive functions as a sacred place to preserve cultural memory, simultaneously it holds silences and censorship.³² In attempting to connect with these silent spaces I have striven to piece back together what has been lost from environmental consciousness. (Fig. 5)

³¹ Joan Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory*, (New York, I.B.Taurius & Co Ltd, 2007), 4.

³² Ann Schilo, *Visual Arts Practice and Affect, Place, Materiality and Embodied Knowledge*, (London, Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2016), 58.



Figure 5. Jorji Gardener, *Archive of Loss*, 2023, cyanotype on tissue paper, dimensions variable.

Artist John Wolseley works to give voice to environmental concerns through his practice of deep connection with the land.³³ Inspired by Wolseley's art practice, and through my field research I feel an increasing sense of connection to the land. Motivated by this awareness, and ideas of new materialism I felt a need to relinquish control to make space for its intervention in the work. To that end I have been leaving the tree-map works onsite, an invitation to *thing power* and other-than-human agency.³⁴ Describing Wolseley's work Sasha Grishin expounds,

³³ Sasha Grishin speaks to this connection, 'It is his method of work to arrive at a remote site and to camp there, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months at a time. It is one of his deliberate strategies for breaking down the conceptual and physical barrier between the artist and his subject, between the artist and nature.' Sasha Grishin, *John Wolseley Land Marks III*, (Victoria, Thames & Hudson Australia, 2015), 12.

³⁴ Wolseley elaborates on this stating, 'By this means I seek to [enter] into a collaborative process with the environment... This collaborative process, of the environment working in conjunction with the artist, helps to erode the boundary between nature and culture.' Sasha Grishin, *John Wolseley Land Marks III*, (Victoria, Thames & Hudson Australia, 2015), 23.

On any conventional level, this painting is unfathomable. It demands a new relationship between the object and the beholder – you are invited to enter the work, to explore the labyrinth of clues and to create for yourself a new reality...³⁵



Figure 6. John Wolseley, (b.1938-) *Natural history of a sphagnum bog, Lake Ina, Tasmania* 2013
watercolour on eight sheets 140 x 400cm

My forested installation of tree maps seeks to disarm the beholder, and invites a new relationship, one in which we ask, 'What would it mean to think of ourselves as one species among many rather than as the highest species?'³⁶

³⁵ Sasha Grishin, *John Wolseley Land Marks III*, (Victoria, Thames & Hudson Australia, 2015), 14.

³⁶ Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming, Love and Extinction*, (USA, University of Virginia Press, 2011), 187.

Methodologies

My research is informed by theorists and artists working in the field of post-human feminism, whose work seeks ways to mend the world. For example, Rose believes that ‘the current extinction crisis is an Earth-shattering disaster, one that cannot be unmade... but yet one toward which we owe an ethical response that includes turning toward others in the hopes of mending at least some of the damage.’³⁷ Carruthers expands on this, stating,

Through connecting people with the greater ecological community of their enviroing world, and by revealing, or foregrounding these ecological relationships in ways that are emotional, embodied, and non-cognitive, [artists] aim to encourage a more caring and responsible role for people within that community.³⁸

Practice led research methodology supports my explorations into conveying complex ideas embedded within the post-human feminist framework, with the aim to entangle the viewer within a shadowy world that unsettles our human perceptions.

According to artist Ben Denham,

Art is never a rarefied object of formal analysis... It is always situated in relation to other forms of knowledge and, crucially, its ideas and processes — the thinking it does and that we do with it — have the potential to disrupt other ways of knowing and create new ways of doing politics.’³⁹

My project thus seeks to encourage viewers to think with the work and in the work. Using the methodology of post-human feminism my intention is to lead the viewer into a deeper understanding of human accountability within these ecological relationships.

Looking to challenge the settler-colonial, and binary worldview of human, other-than-human, my research led me to the methodology of new materialism. Within post-humanistic thought,

³⁷ Turning toward is an important concept in my work. ‘It is a willingness toward dialogue, a willingness toward responsibility, a choice for encounter and response, a turning toward rather than a turning away.’ Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming, Love and Extinction*, (USA, University of Virginia Press, 2011) 5.

³⁸ Beth Carruthers, *PRAXIS: Acting as If Everything Matters*, (Lancaster University, 2006), 6.

³⁹ Ben Denham, What Matters: Staying with the Trouble by Donna Haraway, *Sydney Review of Books*, 7 April 2017, <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/review/staying-with-the-trouble-donna-haraway/>

New Materialism 'gives special attention to matter by avoiding binary understandings such as mind-body and human-nonhuman.'⁴⁰

According to Bennett,

Materiality is a rubric that tends to horizontalize the relations between humans, biota, and abiota. It draws human attention sideways, away from an ontologically ranked Great Chain of Being and towards a greater appreciation of the complex entanglements of humans and nonhumans.⁴¹

Using inks made from onsite materials, such as leaves, bark, and galls I meld my relationship with place, and the agency of the materials themselves, into the work. Inspired by the practice of John Wolseley, I am experimenting with leaving the tree-maps at the reserve, allowing for the potential force and agency of *thing power* to take place.⁴² Inviting this influence into the work via the ink and artworks left on site, I seek a collaboration with other-than-human. By relinquishing my ownership and power over the work I seek to undermine our anthropocentric *modus operandi*.⁴³

Post-human feminist ideas are presented in the work through a critique of colonisation. My research engages in a critical examination of the politics underpinning Western cartography, whereby the map is always believed to be an authoritative source of knowledge. By surveying and undermining the map as a tool of colonisation I raise questions of political power dynamics.⁴⁴ Using the map to critique colonisation has required a great deal of consideration and I have experimented with various methods in my attempts.⁴⁵ Initially I drew

⁴⁰ 'Posthuman theory is an overarching term for theory that breaks from previous anthropocentric perspectives. Here, human aims and goals are decentred, allowing for other interpretations regarding the ontology, epistemology, and ethics of matter.' N. Leonard, 'The Arts and New Materialism: A Call to Stewardship through Mercy, Grace, and Hope,' in *Humanities*, 9, (2020), 84, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/9/3/84>

⁴¹ While Bennett's work sits within new materialism, she has developed a theory of *Vibrant matter*, which presents the idea that nonhuman matter has its own energy and force, which she terms *thing-power*. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter a political ecology of things*, (USA, Duke University Press, 2010), 112.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Leonard clarifies, 'Thus, by engaging with art within a new materialist framework, art is not a symbolic binary statement but a provocation to change the becoming of the world.' N. Leonard, 'The Arts and New Materialism: A Call to Stewardship through Mercy, Grace, and Hope'.in *Humanities*, 9, 2020, 84, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/9/3/84>

⁴⁴ Fels and Wood underscore this by explaining, 'Cartography was primarily a form of political discourse concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of power. The map is nothing more than a vehicle for the creation and conveying of authority about, and ultimately over, territory.' John Fels, Denis Wood, *The Nature of Maps*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2008), xv, 7.

⁴⁵ In my explorations to undermine the map I draw on Harmon's assertion that artists can work outside of the usual conventions. 'Traditional maps assert, "This is how the world is," and expect the reader to agree. Artists'

the map into the tree shapes, to highlight urbanisation and the use of maps as hegemonic tools of colonisation. Upon reflection I questioned how successful this was and explored other ways to connect my work with the key concepts and methodologies, including fragmentation, alchemical process, and repair. The tracings of the map within the tree shapes appear to give directions, but obscurity and fragmentation disrupt our view and encourage us to 'make kin in lines of inventive connection.'⁴⁶ (Fig. 7) My work aims to follow Haraway's injunction to '... make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places.'⁴⁷



Figure 7 Jorji Gardener, *Tree-map*, studio work in progress, 2023, rice paper, inks, pencil, (detail).

maps countermand that complicity...' Katherine Harmon, *The Map as Art, Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography*, (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 11.

⁴⁶ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Croydon, Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Late into the project I was excited to discover the concept of deep mapping. From my research I established that the ideas encapsulated within deep mapping are accordant with my project.⁴⁸ While deep mapping is associated with cartography it does not focus on this aspect alone. Iain Biggs, artist, and writer offers this clarification,

Whatever a 'deep map' might be, it is not a map in any cartographic sense. Deep mapping is an open-ended *process*, something both much more inclusive than attempted by cartography and much harder to describe. [Deep mapping] continues, as ever, in an uncertain and fluid space triangulated between individual need, the sense of creative wonder that informs the arts, and informed, specific, place-based scholarly research.⁴⁹

Further readings offered insights as to how deep mapping aligns to my ethos and art practice. Summarising much of the focus of my exegesis Iain Biggs asserts, '[Deep mapping] is a timely reminder of the ways in which counter-cartographies continue to unpick the limitations and injustices that underwrite colonial cartographies and their social and environmental impact.'⁵⁰

⁴⁸ 'Deep mapping is an approach by which artists, scientists and scholars attempt to capture the different meanings and experiences that are associated with particular places.' Professor Claire Connolly, Dr. Rob McAllen, 'Deep Mapping,' *Deep Maps: West Cork Coastal Cultures*, <http://www.deepmapscork.ie/deep-map-west-cork/deep-maps/>

⁴⁹ Biggs, Iain, Open Deep Mappings Today – A Personal Introduction, *Climate Cultures Creative Conversations for the Anthropocene*, <https://climatecultures.net/?s=deep+mapping>

⁵⁰ Ibid

Methods

At the heart of my project is Engelbrecht Reserve, a National Trust bushland two kilometres from my home in the Adelaide Hills and close to my heart. I have been walking and birding there for twenty years and it is home to over 70 species of native birds, many of which are now in decline.⁵¹ As my project is site specific and situated on Peramangk country I sought to learn from and include the First Nations perspective in whichever ways were appropriate. Early in the project I made connection with Courtney Hebbberman, a traditional custodian of the Adelaide Hills region. Originally, I wanted to include the Peramangk names of the birds, as I feel that it is important to acknowledge these birds had names before colonisers such as John Gould renamed them. However, I learned from Hebbberman that there is little retained of Peramangk language following colonisation, including Peramangk names for birds. In his book *The Road to Botany Bay*, Paul Carter reinforces the importance of naming, stating, 'The historical space of the white settlers emerged through the medium of language.'⁵² Writing in *Manifesto for the Anthropocene*, Margaret J. Somerville adds to this, arguing, 'Where language and stories have been disconnected from country, detailed and intense language work is at the heart of deep mapping.'⁵³ This gives impetus to my project to represent the birds and in keeping with my post-human feminist framework, I wonder what the birds would tell us.

My aim throughout the year has been to unsettle the human view, and to disrupt the illusion of being separate from the environment. *Liminal States* (Fig. 8) depicts my early field experiments visiting the reserve at night. This uncanny environment offered an ideal realm to locate myself in a liminal state, betwixt and between worlds. Walking onsite at night gave me an eerie sense of otherworldly connection and allowed space for imagining an other-than-

⁵¹ Decline of Woodland Birds in the Mount Lofty Ranges, *Nature Conservation Society of South Australia*, <https://www.ncssa.asn.au/mount-lofty-ranges-woodland-birds/>

⁵² Paul Carter elaborates that while there are recordings that the First Australians shared the proper names with the settlers, 'the authority for this name resides with the governor, not with the informant.' Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay, An Exploration of Landscape and History*, (London, Knopf, 1987), 67.

⁵³ 'By mapping the events in the recorded language stories back onto the landscape, deep mapping becomes another process for singing the country. Each time the story is told through sharing such a map and its stories, the places, the language, and the stories are remade.' *Manifesto for the Anthropocene, etc*, Margaret J. Somerville, 118.

human view. This singular method enabled me to discern how site responsive artworks might offer ways to make kin with other species in a fragmented but shared envrioning world.



Figure 8. Jorji Gardener, *Liminal States*, 2023, photograph, 18 x 13 cm.

The tree-map process begins with an application of earthy inks to create a patterned ground to build on. In my efforts to subvert the power of the map I have experimented to create obscuration and erosion within the dominant structure of the map. By my omissions and alterations of the map I aim to demonstrate the arbitrary power of the map maker, and to

undermine the colonial power inherent in the map. Experimenting with erasures and overlays the original reading of the map becomes an emerging pattern within the tree shapes that help create cohesion and allow a more fluid reading. (Fig. 9)



Figure 9. Jorji Gardener, *Erasures and Overlays, Tree-maps*, 2023, rice paper, botanical inks. (detail)

Guided by concepts of new materialism I leave the works onsite. This allows elements such as rain, animals, and insects to create new mark making, and to obscure and corrode the map, creating absences within the work. Through this process I am inviting a collaboration with the unknown, invoking *thing power*. I have discovered that funnel web spiders can be relied upon to create holes in the paper reflecting an other-than-human presence and leaving the paper fragmented, echoing ongoing habitat loss. By giving voice to other-than-human agents, I am trying to redress this, if only in a symbolic sense.⁵⁴ Having left the tree-maps (Fig.10) on site I return to collect them with a sense of anticipation for what I will find.

⁵⁴ Giving voice to the forces of nature, can be seen in Wolseley's work as described by Sasha Grishin, 'In the whole process of Wolseley's artmaking there is the quality of fluidity, where the environment is invited to intrude.' Sasha Grishin, *John Wolseley Land Marks III*, (Victoria, Thames & Hudson Australia, 2015), 23.



Figure 10, Jorji Gardener, *Field work in progress*, 2023, rice paper, inks, dimensions variable.

Repair has become an important aspect of the work and speaks to bearing witness, by cultivating capacity for response. Rose considers that, 'Recuperative work takes an ethical stance in opposition to the temporal and monological practices that cause suffering and damage... [This] work impels one immediately into moral responsibility.'⁵⁵ Research at my local historic society revealed that maps were often amended, with revisions being added as urbanisation expanded. (Fig. 11)

⁵⁵ Deborah Bird Rose clarifies, 'I use the term 'recuperation' in preference to more familiar terms such as 'recovery' or 'restoration' because in contemporary usage it seems to communicate the humility of the project.' Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: ethics for decolonisation*, (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2004), 24, 25.

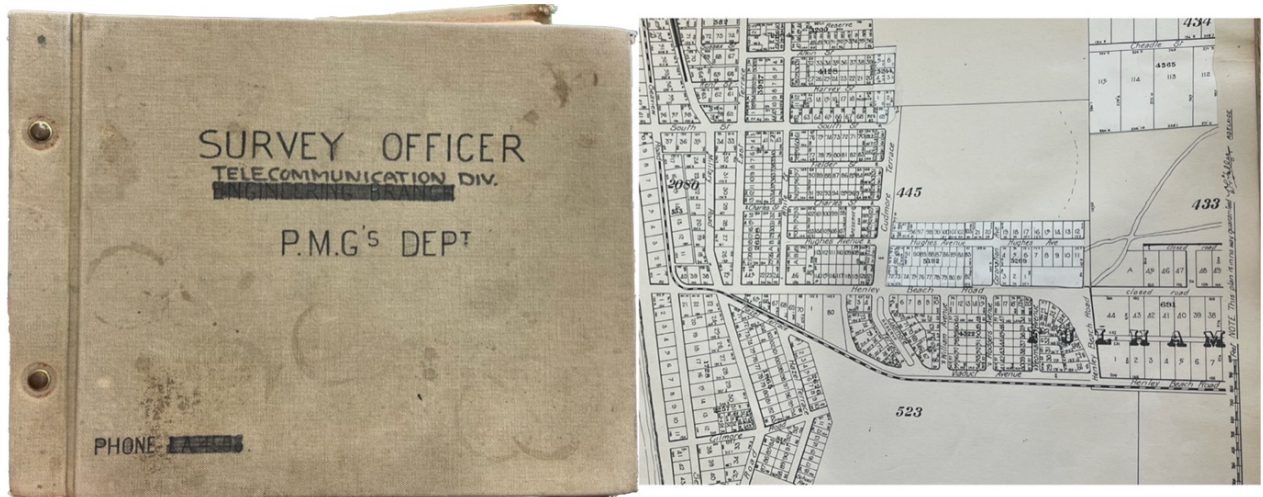


Figure 11. *Historical map collection*, courtesy of Stirling Historical Society, 2023, paper, ink, 28 x 34 cm

Assessing the effects of fragmentation to the tree-maps from onsite weathering, I saw an opportunity to engage in this process of repair, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. While concepts of alteration can be associated with colonisation and habitat loss, repair can signify healing and restoration. This work is slow, and I draw on the paper conservation skills I learned at Artlab. My processes correlate to the work of Laurence who incorporates science disciplines within her art practice. The techniques I am most familiar with are heat sensitive paper, and Japanese tissue paper used in conjunction with an archival cellulose product, for which I have substituted Japanese rice paste, which has proved to be very resilient. This act of mending brings me closer to the tree-maps, I re-investigate them, looking for the stories left by other-than-human actors.

Outcomes and Conclusion

My Honours investigations have culminated into a series of works on paper that seek to immerse and entangle the viewer. On entering a forested world, you are guided through a grove of suspended tree-like forms. Deeper inspection reveals mapping, and mark making within the tree-maps, with evidence of fragmentation and repair within the works. While concepts of alteration can be associated with colonisation and habitat loss, repair can signify healing and restoration. Glimpsed from between the tree-maps is a wall-mounted installation of illuminated bird calls which invite further exploration. Winding your way through the work you arrive at an archive of weathered papers impregnated with natural inks made from the site as a testimony to loss and recovery. An audio of bird calls engages the senses and alludes to the other-than-human aspect of the work. These four distinct works have emerged from detailed research into environmental science-based art practices and demonstrate the complexities and depth of the subject matter. This multiplicity within the work can be viewed as analogous to the intricate entanglements of ecological communities. Material sensitivity in these works on paper, aims to create cohesion and a situatedness of the work in relation to each other and to the site. Through the process of mapping my relationship with a specific bushland reserve on Peramangk land in the Adelaide Hills, I hope to encourage caring for country and its other-than-human inhabitants.

These findings provide a framework for my contribution to ongoing discussion and response towards an equitable world. One in which we are capable ‘...of realising more fully what it means to be a person, and a human person, in the company of other persons, not all of whom are human but all of whom are worthy of respect.’⁵⁶ Working with ideas of post-human feminism has provided me with a language to speak about environmental issues in my future practice. Both on a personal and professional level I am consoled that my feelings of loss and grief in response to environmental destruction can be articulated within an academic and artistic context.

⁵⁶ Graham Harvey, *Animism*, (London: C. Hurst & Co. 2017), xxiii.

The experience of allowing my studio led research to direct my path has been invaluable. Several areas of my work developed contrary to my earlier ideas or eventuated through happenstance. Motivated by a shortage of space I hung the tree-maps and was moved by how the paper became translucent and lively. I recognised that this could achieve my aspiration to create an immersive experience, to lead the viewer into a shadowy, forested world.

Fiona Hall encapsulates this perfectly stating,

For most of us in our increasingly urbanised lives, the prospect of losing our way in some truly wild place exists only in the shadowy hinterland of our imaginations. If we should wander off the beaten track on a modern-day pilgrimage to nature... we would be led on by the thought, scary and enticing, that we also could lose ourselves in a wild realm... and we might by our journey's end have found ourselves anew, transformed by the experience.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Peter Emmett, Tony Kanellos., *Santos MEB Museum of Economic Botany*, (South Australia, Adelaide, Board of the Botanic Gardens & State Herbarium, 2010), 100.

In conclusion, this Honours research year has provided a unique opportunity to immerse myself in extensive investigations in the fields of environmental art, ethics, and ecology. The ideological foundation supporting my work is a belief that humans have a moral obligation and responsibility to care for the natural world. By encouraging ideas of making kin with other-than-human I have sought to unsettle our anthropocentric viewpoint to encourage caring for country.

Through the process of practice led research I have been able to examine my question, how site responsive art works can offer ways to make kin with other species in a fragmented but shared enviroing world. Centring my research within the methodologies of post human feminism, and new materialism has enabled me to critique Cartesian dualism. This research has generated a deeper understanding of the politics and principles underpinning the current environmental crisis. By engaging with these issues in studio research I have created a body of work that aspires to engage the viewer in an immersive, entangled experience.

Emerging from this project I have acquired a sense of my place in the community of theorists and artists working in the field of eco-arts. Besides acquiring new skills in installation art, I have gained invaluable insights and expertise in the alchemy of ink making, which I intend to expand on. These understandings, and accumulation of skills could not have been achieved through traditional modes of enquiry. The connection I have made with Hebbberman has been significant and has led to ongoing potential research. At the completion of my Honours year, I find myself enthusiastic to continue further academic study, and so while this project draws to a conclusion it is also a beginning.

List of Figures:

Figure 1. Janet Laurence, (b.1947-) *Theatre of Trees*, 2018–2019. Four circular structures, mesh, silk, duraclear, audio, video projections, books, scientific glass, plant specimens, botanical models and substances. dimensions unstated. <https://www.janetlaurence.com> Accessed 27 March 2023.

Figure 2. Janet Laurence, (b.1947-) *The matter of the masters* (detail), 2017, mixed media, dimensions variable. <https://arcone.com.au/news2/xahg98hxl4ex4hwy4hg7x6srbshc3z> accessed 8 Sept 2023

Figure 3. Lucienne Rickard (b. 1981-) *Extinction Studies*, The least Vermillion Flycatcher, 2019, graphite on paper, detail image, dimensions unstated. <https://www.salarts.org.au/portfolio/past-residents/lucienne-rickard/> Accessed 17 April 2023

Figure 4. Jorji Gardener, (b.1965-) *Bird Guides*, (series) 2023, pierced paper, discarded from the Ornithology department, SAM, 15 x 30cm. Photo by James Field.

Figure 5. Jorji Gardener, (b.1965-) *Archive of Loss*, 2023, cyanotype prints, dimensions variable. Artist's photo.

Figure 6. John Wolseley, (b.1938-) *Natural history of a sphagnum bog, Lake Ina, Tasmania* 2013, watercolour on eight sheets 140 x 400cm. <https://johnwolseley.net/exhibitions/john-wolseley-heartlands-and-headwaters> Accessed 10 September 2023

Figure .7 Jorji Gardener, (b.1965-) *Tree-map*, studio work in progress, 2023, rice paper, inks, pencil. (detail) Photo by James Field.

Figure 8. Jorji Gardener, *Liminal States*, 2023, photograph, 18 x 13 cm. Artist's photo.

Figure 9. Jorji Gardener, *Erasures and Overlays, Tree-maps*, 2023, rice paper, botanical inks. (detail) Artist's photo.

Figure 10, Jorji Gardener, *Field work in progress*, 2023, rice paper, inks, dimensions variable.
Artist's photo.

Figure 11. *Historical map collection*, courtesy of Stirling Historical Society, 2023, paper, ink, 28 x 34 cm. Artist's photo.

Figure 12. District Council of Stirling map, 1976, paper, ink, (detail) Artist's photo.

Figure 13. *Birds SA list for Engelbrecht Reserve*, 2022. [https://birdssa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/Engelbrook Reserve Bird list.pdf](https://birdssa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/Engelbrook_Reserve_Bird_list.pdf) accessed 20 August 2023.

Figure 14. *Spectrogram of a Superb Fairywren*, recorded by Mark Robbins, 2018, South Australia. Courtesy of ebird. <https://ebird.org/home> accessed 15 April 2023.

Figure 15. Julia Hollingsworth, *Birds aren't all singing the same song. They have dialects, too.* CNN, 2020. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/13/asia/bird-dialects-song-intl-hnk/index.html> accessed 14 October 2023.

Figure 16. Processing Iron Oxide, 2022, Artist's photo.

Figure 17. Jorji Gardener, Iron gall ink recipes and samples, 2022, photo Grant Hancock

Figure 18. Iron gall ink, halo effect, 2019, Artist's photo.

Figure 19. Paul Garside, Zoë Miller, *Iron gall ink on paper: Saving the words that eat themselves*, 2021. photo credit: <https://blogs.bl.uk/collectioncare/ink/>

Figure 20. Jorji Gardener, crystallisation process, 2023, (detail), Artist's photo.

Figure 21. Jorji Gardener, Ink samples, 2023, botanical inks on paper, dimensions variable.
Artist's photo

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Map



Figure 12. District Council of Stirling map, (1976) given to me in 2010. It was not until I began to trace out the map that I discovered there are many discrepancies. This is due to the fact the original map was drawn up in 1903 in London, by people who had never been here, and did not realise that their design was incompatible with the steep terrain. Photo Jorji Gardener.

Appendix 2. Bird List

 BirdsSA birdssa.asn.au	Bird list for ENGELBRECHT RESERVE, BRIDGEWATER		
	-35.01944 °N 138.76390 °E or new	35°01'10" S 138°45'50" E	54 295983 6122516
Observers:Jorji Gardener		Phone: (H) (M) Email:	
Date: Start Time: End Time:			

Codes (leave blank for Present)				
D = Dead	H = Heard	O = Overhead	B = Breeding	B1 = Mating
B2 = Nest Building	B3 = Nest with eggs	B4 = Nest with chicks	B5 = Dependent fledglings	B6 = Bird on nest

NON-PASSERINES	Code	No.	PASSERINES	Code	No.	PASSERINES	Code	No.
Maned Duck			White-throated Treecreeper					
Pacific Black Duck			Superb Fairywren					
White-faced Heron			Eastern Spinebill					
Black-shouldered Kite			Crescent Honeyeater					
Wedge-tailed Eagle			New Holland Honeyeater					
Brown Goshawk			White-naped Honeyeater					
Collared Sparrowhawk			Red Wattlebird					
Common Bronzewing			Yellow-faced Honeyeater					
Southern Boobook			White-plumed Honeyeater					
Tawny Frogmouth			Spotted Pardalote					
White-throated Needletail			Striated Pardalote					
Shining Bronze Cuckoo			White-browed Scrubwren					
Pallid Cuckoo			Weebill					
Fan-tailed Cuckoo			Brown Thornbill					
Laughing Kookaburra			Buff-rumped Thornbill					
Sacred Kingfisher			Yellow-rumped Thornbill					
Rainbow Bee-eater			Striated Thornbill					
Nankeen Kestrel			Dusky Woodswallow					
Galah			Australian Magpie					
Little Corella			Black-winged Currawong (Grey Currawong)					
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo			Black-faced Cuckooshrike					
Red-rumped Parrot			White-winged Triller					
Adelaide Rosella (Crimson Rosella)			Black-capped Sittella (Varied Sittella)					
Eastern Rosella			Eastern Shrikebill (Crested Shrikebill)					
Rainbow Lorikeet			Rufous Whistler					
Musk Lorikeet			Western Whistler					
			Grey Shrike-thrush					
			Grey Fantail					
			Magpie-lark					
			Restless Flycatcher					
			Little Raven					
			White-winged Chough					
			Hooded Robin					
			Jacky Winter					
			Scarlet Robin					
			Red-capped Robin					
			Silvereye					
			Tree Martin					
			Welcome Swallow					
			*Common Blackbird					
			Bassian Thrush					
			Mistletoebird					
			Red-browed Finch					
			*European Goldfinch					

If Species in **BOLD** are seen a "Rare Bird Record Report" should be submitted.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ONLY BIRDS SEEN WITHIN THE RESERVE ARE RECORDED ON THIS LIST. IF YOU SEE BIRDS OUTSIDE THE RESERVE PLEASE MARK ACCORDINGLY OR PREFERABLY USE A SEPARATE LIST.

On completion email to: birdrecords@birdssa.asn.au or post to: Birds Records, Birds SA c/- SA Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA, 500

Revised: 13 January 2022

70

Figure 13. Birds SA list for Engelbrecht Reserve, 2022. ⁵⁸

⁵⁸ https://birdssa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/Engelbrook_Reserve_Bird_list.pdf

Appendix 3. Spectrograms.

In seeking to express the bird's voice in my honours research I turned to spectrograms to create a visual representation of their calls.

Spectrograms offer a way to visualise the range and diversity of bird calls. They depict frequency in kilohertz on the vertical axis, time on the horizontal axis, and amplitude, or volume, being represented by the intensity of the lines. (Fig 14)

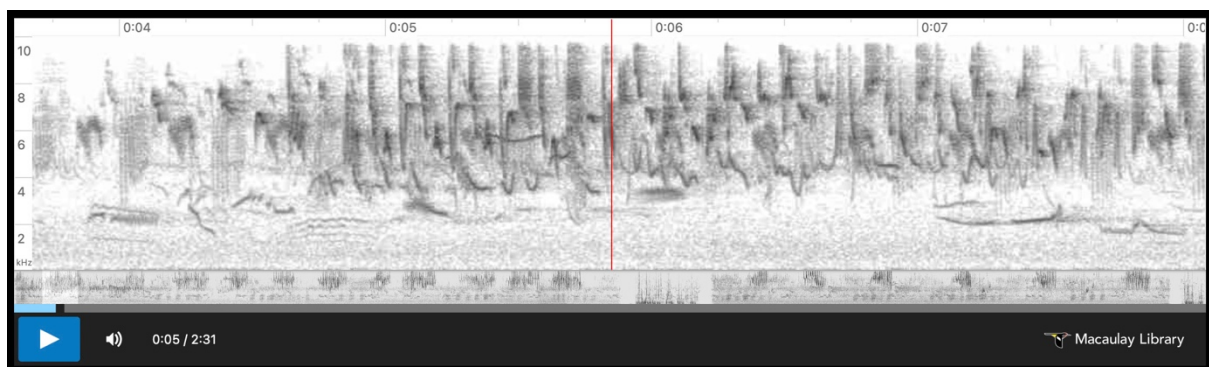


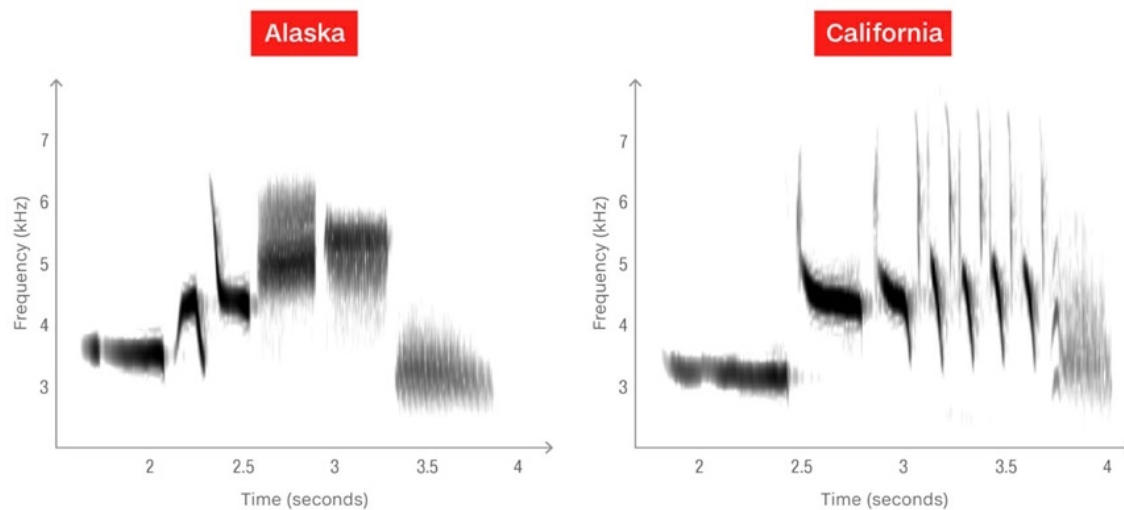
Figure 14. Spectrogram of a Superb Fairywren, recorded by Mark Robbins, 2018, South Australia. Courtesy of ebird.⁵⁹

Also known as sonograms, these frequency patterns depict the language of birds, sometimes beyond our hearing.⁶⁰ An interesting, little-known fact is that birds have regional accents. The Grey Shrikethrush, one of the most beautiful Australian songbirds, sounds quite different in the Adelaide hills to those at Aldinga or out in the Mallee country. (Fig 15) shows the song variation in the White-crowned sparrow from the US. By understanding that humans share similarities with birds, such as a local dialect, we can begin to relate to them on a deeper level.

⁵⁹ <https://ebird.org/home>

⁶⁰ "Humans can detect sounds in a frequency range from about 20 Hz to 20 kHz." However, bird calls can range beyond this up to 40 kHz. Purves D, Augustine GJ, Fitzpatrick D, et al., editors. Neuroscience. 2nd edition. Sunderland (MA): Sinauer Associates; (2001) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK10799/>

Sonagrams taken of white-crowned sparrow song in two different locations in the US



CNN Source: Donald Kroodsmma. Full recordings can be heard at birdsongforthe curious.com

Figure 15. Julia Hollingsworth, *Birds aren't all singing the same song. They have dialects, too.*

CNN, (2020) ⁶¹

Birdwatching is as much an activity of listening as of seeing.⁶² Over time I have come to know many species by their calls or the sound of their wingbeats. While people are often astounded that it is possible to recognise a bird from its call, it is accepted that one can identify a familiar voice, such as a friend or the dulcet tones of David Attenborough. I believe 'familiar' is the key word here, with its etymological roots in family, related, or intimate. By becoming acquainted with the bird calls, one becomes intimate, related, kin, an important process in making kin with other-than-human.⁶³

⁶¹ Hollingsworth, Julia, *Birds aren't all singing the same song. They have dialects, too.* CNN, (2020). <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/13/asia/bird-dialects-song-intl-hnk/index.html>

⁶² Although the term birdwatching implies seeing, most birders will agree that it is predominantly about listening. Many people, such as Juan Pablo Culasso, who are visually impaired are excellent birders due to their heightened ability to focus on sound. <https://www.sonidosinvisibles.com.uy>

⁶³ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Croydon, Duke University Press, 2016).

Appendix 4. Alchemy of Ink:

The process of making my own inks from site materials has been fundamental to this honour's project and has included experimenting with botanical material and iron oxides from the reserve. Collecting from the site was carried out with sensitivity to the environment, using only detritus plant material, and in consultation with Hebberman who advised me on using the iron oxide. (Fig. 16)



Figure 16. Processing the iron oxide involves pulverising the stone to a powder, adding water to create a slurry, which is repeatedly ground and sieved until a fine pigment is achieved.

In addition to making botanical and mineral pigments I have continued to work with the historical iron gall ink, which I was introduced to while working on the SAM collection at Artlab. (Fig. 17) 'Iron gall ink is made from galls, formed by wasps laying their eggs into the tissue of a tree, resulting in growths that are high in tannins... Most of the archival material from the Middle Ages onwards was written with this indelible and distinctive ink.'⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Jorji Gardener, Viv Szekeres, *Flight, An Illustrated Notebook of Bird Life and Loss*, (South Australia, Curated Sky Publications, 2022), 23.



Figure 17. Jorji Gardener, Iron gall ink recipes and samples, 2022, photo Grant Hancock

It is not within the scope of this exegesis to delve deeply into the history or chemistry of ink; however, an important factor that relates to my work is iron gall ink's reaction to humidity, which over time causes it to eat away the paper.⁶⁵ I have been fascinated by its capacity to corrode the paper, and one of my aims this year was to further explore this attribute. The ink's corrosion of the paper is a huge problem for the conservation of historic documents worldwide. While there is much research on the mechanisms of iron gall ink and techniques to address paper conservation, there has been little research undertaken from an artist's perspective.

⁶⁵ Gerhard, Banik, 1998, Ink corrosion – Chemistry, *Iron gall Ink Website*, <https://irongallink.org/ink-corrosion-chemistry.html>

One of my objectives at the start of this project was to extend my understanding of the ink by further experimentation, with the view to understand the capacity and potential of this ink. By weathering the paper at the reserve, I hoped to recreate the corrosion of the paper, echoing the fragmentation of habitat and bird species. However, while there has been some degradation, I have not been able to recreate the characteristic halo effect, and corrosion commonly found in historic documents. (Fig. 18, 19)



Figure 18. Iron gall ink, halo effect, 2019.



Figure 19. Paul Garside, Zoë Miller, *Iron gall ink on paper: Saving the words that eat themselves*, 2021.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ <https://blogs.bl.uk/collectioncare/ink/>

My experiments with alchemical processes have included saturating the paper allowing the inks to bleed. I have tested a variety of methods such as altering the pH using natural products such as vinegar and washing soda. Applications of acidic or alkaline solutions to the inked tree-maps created a range of reactions that changed the hue, intensity of the ink. I discovered that by sizing the paper with gelatine and alum I could selectively prevent the inks bleeding, and furthermore it left a glittering sheen. I have achieved some unexpected and fascinating results, including a process of crystallisation from the combination of iron salts and onsite exposure. (Fig. 20)

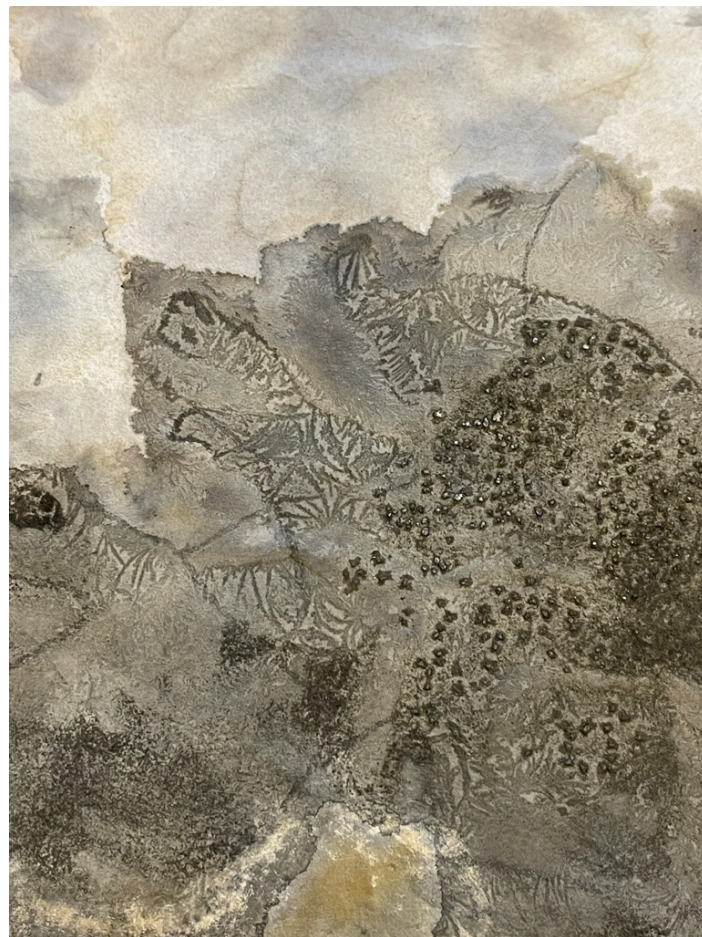


Figure 20. Jorji Gardener, crystallisation process, 2023, (detail)

Through practice led research I have produced inks from a variety of plant species. (Fig 21)
I found the best results came from using the bark of *Acacia pycnantha*, *Eucalyptus baxteri*,
and *Eucalyptus obliqua*, all endemic species to the Mount Lofty Ranges.



Figure 21. Jorji Gardener, Ink samples, 2023, botanical inks on paper, dimensions variable.

These experiments have resulted in a range of pigments and inks which reflect the materiality of the site in my work. Developing my skills in ink making has encouraged a closer connection and understanding of the plants and their ecosystems within my local bushland reserve.